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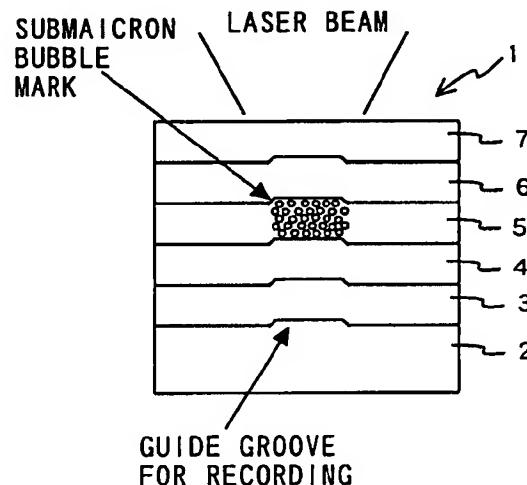
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(54) **INFORMATION RECORDING MEDIUM AND PROCESS FOR PRODUCING THE SAME**

(57) An information recording medium has an excellent jitter characteristic with a considerable difference in reflectance between prior to and subsequent to recording. The information recording medium includes a recording layer which contains a material having a reflectance which varies by irradiation of a light beam, on which information is recorded as reflectance variations, and a substrate for supporting the recording layer, the recording layer including a metal nitride as a major component. In a method of manufacturing the information recording medium having a recording layer which includes a material having a reflectance which varies by irradiation of a light beam, on which information is recorded as reflectance variations, and the substrate for supporting the recording layer, the recording layer including a metal nitride as a major component, the method includes a recording layer forming step for forming the recording layer by a reactive sputtering method which uses a target comprised of a metal constituting a metal nitride, wherein a flow ratio Ar:N₂ in an atmosphere including Ar and N₂ in the recording layer forming step is set within the range of 80:10 to 10:80.

FIG. 1



Description**TECHNICAL FIELD**

5 [0001] The present invention relates to an optical information recording medium such as an optical disc, an optical card and the like for recording/reproducing information by irradiating a light beam, and a method of manufacturing the same.

BACKGROUND ART

10 [0002] In recent years, a DVD (Digital Versatile Disc) is widely used as an information recording medium for recording/reproducing data, such as video data, audio data, computer data, and the like. The DVD comes in different types: in addition to the DVD used exclusively for reproduction, the DVD-R (recordable) which uses an organic coloring material in the recording layer thereof to allow writing-once-reading-many, the DVD-RW (re-recordable) which uses a phase change material in the recording layer thereof to allow rewriting many times, and the like.

15 [0003] While there is a demand for a capability of recording/reproducing by light beams of wave range shorter than 635 nm so as to cope with higher density, the conventional write-once-read-many optical disc has been unable to fully realize characteristics of the optical disc.

20 [0004] In addition, various optical discs of write-once type are reported, for example, one of which has a recording layer to be penetrated by the irradiation of a laser beam to have a hole, in another of which a bubble cavity in a recording layer is formed by the irradiation of a laser beam, another of which has a recording layer to have a protuberance, in further another of which a heat decomposable substance is dispersed in the recording layer by the irradiation of a laser beam. These conventional recording methods have a problem in that it is difficult to control the size and edge of a minute recorded mark formed on the recording layer with a high density recording. In other words, as shown in Fig. 16, the recorded mark is formed so as to spread out a guide groove during the recording.

25 [0005] Further, in the case of the write-once-read-many disc, rewriting is not allowed on an area once recorded. This increases consumption of the discs. The effects on the environment due to the dumping of the discs should be considered, because some discs may contain materials which are considered to be deleterious under "a law concerning promotion of improvements in grasp of the amount of a specific chemical material discharged to the environment, and in the control thereof or the like", i.e., PRT (Pollutant Release and Transfer Register) law.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

30 [0006] It is an object of the present invention to provide an information recording medium which has a considerable difference in reflectance between prior to and subsequent to recording, and is excellent in reproduction property such as a jitter characteristic or the like.

35 [0007] The information recording medium according to the present invention is characterized by comprising a recording layer which includes a material having a reflectance varying by irradiation of a light beam and on which information is recorded as reflectance variations, and a substrate for supporting the recording layer, wherein the recording layer includes a metal nitride.

40 [0008] The information recording medium according to the present invention is characterized in that said recording layer of the information recording medium includes a mixture of both a low temperature decomposable nitride insufficiently nitrided and capable of being decomposed at a predetermined temperature to generate nitrogen and a high temperature decomposable compound capable of being decomposed at a temperature higher than said predetermined temperature.

45 [0009] A method of manufacturing an information recording medium according to the present invention is directed to a manufacturing an information recording medium having a recording layer which includes a material having a reflectance varying by irradiation of a light beam, on which information is recorded as reflectance variations, and a substrate for supporting said recording layer, the recording layer including a metal nitride as a major component, the method comprising: a recording layer forming step for forming said recording layer by a reactive sputtering method using a target comprised of a metal constituting said metal nitride, characterized in that a flow ratio Ar:N₂ in an atmosphere including Ar and N₂ in said recording layer forming step is set within the range of 80:10 to 10:80.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

55 [0010]

Fig. 1 is a partial cross sectional view schematically illustrating an information recording medium according to the

present invention.

Fig. 2 is a partial plan view schematically illustrating an information recording medium according to the present invention.

Fig. 3 is a graph showing a curve of differential scanning calorimetry performed on a BiN recording layer of information recording medium.

Fig. 4 is a graph showing a spectral characteristic curves of ESCA analysis performed on a BiN recording layer of information recording medium before and after recording data.

Fig. 5 is a flow chart showing a method of manufacturing the information recording medium according to the present invention.

Fig. 6 is a graph showing variations in absorption rate of 405 nm wavelength light in a recording layer of an example.

Fig. 7 is a graph showing variations in absorption rate of 635 nm wavelength light in the recording layer of the example.

Fig. 8 is a graph showing variations in a recording laser power and a jitter after recording with respect to a dose of nitrogen in the recording layer of the example.

Fig. 9 is a graph showing variations in a deposition rate with respect to a dose of nitrogen in the recording layer of the example.

Fig. 10 is a photograph showing recorded marks formed on Ta BiN recording layer of information recording medium of embodiment according to the invention.

Fig. 11 is a photograph showing recorded marks formed on a SnTiN recording layer of information recording medium of embodiment according to the invention.

Fig. 12 is a graph showing variations in the percentage of contents of Ge, a nitride, and an oxide thereof with respect to a dose of nitrogen in the recording layer of the example.

Fig. 13 is a graph showing variations in the percentage of contents of Bi, a nitride, and an oxide thereof with respect to a dose of nitrogen in the recording layer of the example.

Fig. 14 is a flow chart showing a setting method for deciding conditions of film-formation to form a recording layer of the information recording medium according to the present invention.

Fig. 15 is a partial cross sectional view schematically illustrating a target for sputtering to form a recording layer of the information recording medium according to the present invention.

Fig. 16 is a partial cross sectional view schematically illustrating a conventional information recording medium according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0011] Exemplary embodiments according to the present invention will be described with reference to the drawings.

[0012] An exemplary configuration of an embodiment is shown in Fig. 1. An information recording medium 1 has a reflecting layer 3, a first dielectric layer 4, a recording layer 5 comprised essentially of a metal nitride as a major component, a second dielectric layer 6, and a light transparent covering layer 7 which are sequentially deposited on a main surface of a substrate 2. As shown in the figure, during recording, laser beams, which are intensity-modulated in accordance with information, are irradiated through the light transparent covering layer 7 to heat the recording layer 5. Since the recording layer includes the metal nitride as a major component and has a low thermal conductivity, the temperature of a laser beam irradiating portion rises due to thermal storage, the recording layer entirely or partly melts, the nitrogen content in the entire recording layer changes, a phase changes followed by changes in multiple reflection conditions of the irradiating portion during solidification, and a reflectance changes to become a recording mark, as shown in Figure 2. Therefore, it is conceivable that the percentage of nitride formed in the recording layer, which varies according to the nitrogen content, affects sensitivity. The variations in light reflectance occurring in this manner is irreversible, so that the recording layer can be used as a once-write-read-many type information medium. Upon reproduction, laser beams are irradiated to an area where the reflectance varied through the light transparent covering layer 7 to read an intensity variation in the reflective light and demodulate the read information.

[0013] The recording layer 5 may also comprise metal nitrides with a combination of, for example, one of Bi, Sn, Fe, and one of Ge, Ti, Si, Al. Further, while the aforementioned metal nitride is not designated under the PRTR law, it may also comprise, for example, a combination of any of Bi, Sn, Fe, and materials such as Mg, Ca, Sr, Sc, Y, Zr, Hf, V, Nb, Tc, Ru, Rh, W, Re, Os, Ir, Pt, Au, Ta, and the like. Effects on environment can be reduced by using materials which are not designated by the PRTR law for the recording material. When consideration is given to a method and an amount to be used, Ti, Te, In, Cu, Zn, or Ag can be used for composition of the metal nitride of the recording layer 5.

[0014] In addition, the recording layer 5 may be constituted by a substance selected from a group consisting of a metal nitride, a metal oxide, a metal carbide and a mixture of at least two thereof, e.g., one of Bi nitride, Sn nitride, Fe nitride, or Cu nitride, and a stable metal compound such as SiO_2 , Al_2O_3 , GeO_2 , SnO , Bi_2O_3 , SiC or the like.

[Principle of recording]

[0015] The recording layer of the recording medium includes a metal compound and nitride thereof as a major component in a homogeneously dispersed phase alloy form. By the laser beam irradiation in a recording process, nitrogen is emitted from nitride in the recording layer. For this, it is necessary for the recording layer to absorb the laser beam and thus, the nitride has to be provided with a certain absorption rate. It is therefore required that the nitride of the recording layer has a non-nitrided component, but not wholly nitrided to have a high transmissivity. On the other hand, since the recording layer made of the nitride insufficiently nitrided has a membranaceous quality similar to a thin amorphous metal film, its stiffness and stress become low and its thermal conductivity increases. In the nitride layer insufficiently nitrided, temperature rise is hard due to transverse dispersion of heat during heating. Moreover, since the thermal decomposition of nitrogen is expanded like a chain reaction, as a result, there occurs that for example the recording light spot makes a large mark greater than the light spot itself, as shown in Fig. 16. This phenomenon raises a problem of difficulty in control over the size and edge shape of mark to be recorded on the recording layer by the laser beam irradiation of purplish blue band. Particularly the recorded large mark is a serious problem to form a minute size mark having a width of 0.1-0.2 μm , though it is out of problem in CD case.

[0016] In the embodiment, the recording layer is constituted by a mixture of both a substance having a high stiffness and the difficult thermal decomposition characteristic and a nitride having the easy thermal decomposition characteristic. This mixture recording layer facilitates to control the thermal decomposition itself and to form the minute mark having a good shape. Besides, in order to record information by variations of optical characteristics, the substance having the difficult thermal decomposition characteristic is selected from materials having a high transmittance. Concretely the recording layer includes a low temperature decomposable nitride (nitrogen emission substance), a non-nitride (non-nitrided component in the nitride i.e., thermal absorber), and a high temperature decomposable compound (metal nitride or metal oxide or metal carbide or the mixture thereof i.e., thermal decomposition controller substance). In fact, the non-nitride will be realized as a non-nitrided component in the nitride composition constituting the recording layer. Therefore, the mixture of both the low temperature decomposable nitride having the non-nitrided component and the high temperature decomposable compound suffice for the recording layer of the recording medium.

[0017] The principle of recording information to the optical disc employing such recording layer is considered as follows.

[0018] First, when the recording laser beam is irradiated onto the optical disc, the thermal absorber i.e., non-nitrided component in the nitride of the recording layer exhibit temperature raise in the beam spot. Next, the low temperature decomposable nitride is decomposed to emit nitrogen. Next, (1) the optical characteristic of the recording layer changes due to the nitrogen emission. Next, (2) the recording layer is deformed by the emitted nitrogen. Here, (2) is only of secondary recording mode. The deformation of the recording layer does not mainly contribute to the recording. The separation of nitrogen is likely to be hindered when the recording layer is suppressed with a storing pressure. Thus, the deformation of the recording layer should be allowed to a certain extent. The dielectric layer has a first role of buffering layer for the deformation of the recording layer when nitrogen comes out from the recording layer, a second role of adjusting layer for the optical characteristic, and a third role of thermal insulation against the effect of the metal reflecting layer radiating heat. The reflecting layer has functions both of the heat radiation and the enhancement of multiple-reflection for ensuring quantity of light. Thus the reflecting layer is not always provided.

[0019] In the optical disc, it is estimated that the irradiation of the recording laser beam makes temperature raise of the recording layer 400 to 600 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ at the maximum. Therefore, the low temperature decomposable nitride and the high temperature decomposable compound should be selected on the basis of a threshold temperature approximately 600 $^{\circ}\text{C}$, for example, in comparison with temperature of decomposition for materials. Table 1 shows the decomposition temperatures of the various metal nitrides.

Table 1

Metal nitrides	Decomposition temperatures (ca. $^{\circ}\text{C}$)
AgN	25
Na ₃ N	200
BiN	220
Cu ₃ N	300
Fe ₂ N	350
SnN	380
GeN	600 or more

Table 1 (continued)

Metal nitrides	Decomposition temperatures (ca. °C)
GaN	1500
CrN	1600
Si ₃ N ₄	1900
AlN	2000
VN	2200
BN	2700
TiN	3300

15 [Low temperature decomposable nitride]

10 [0020] It is necessary for the low temperature decomposable nitride to exhibit the separation reaction of nitrogen at a low temperature of 600 °C or less. Further, it is considered that the separation reaction of nitrogen preferably begins at a temperature of 400 °C or less on the basis of recording sensitivity. However, a substance exhibiting the separation 15 of nitrogen at 80 °C or less should not be employed for fear of an influence to preservation characteristic of the recording layer at a too low temperature. Thus, the threshold temperature is 100 °C or more preferable for the low temperature decomposable nitride. In addition, if the environment is considered, then the selection of layer component is performed except materials specified under the PRTR Low. The inventors have investigated the selection conditions of the substance in addition to sputterable material and then directed the attention to the nitride constituted by metals having 20 comparatively low melting point such as Bi, Sn or the like as prospective low temperature decomposable nitrides. If the PRTR Low is not considered then materials such as Cu or the like are usable for the component of the low temperature decomposable nitride.

25 [0021] The inventors have formed a film of BiN (recording layer) and analyzed the film with a differential scanning calorimetry. The BiN film has decomposed at approximately 220 °C as shown in Fig. 3. Further, the BiN film has 30 exhibited a starting temperature of practice decomposing, approximately 180 °C which is lower than its decomposition temperature by 50-70 °C. It is considered in view of the allowable margin of error that the decomposition of BiN starts a temperature lower than its decomposition temperature by 50-100 °C. The inventors have formed optical discs having recording layers constituted by low temperature decomposable nitrides such as BiN, SnN and the like respectively and then evaluated them. As a result, it comes to a conclusion that BiN is superior to SnN as the low temperature decomposable 35 nitride. However, the selection of SnN doesn't matter.

40 [0022] Fig. 4 shows spectral characteristics curves of the recording layer employing BiN as a low temperature decomposable nitride resulting from ESCA (Electron Spectroscopy for Chemical Analysis or X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy). In these spectral characteristics curves, since peaks of Bi metal appear after recording but not at the non-recording portion, it is evidence that BiN decompose to nitrogen and bismuth.

45 [High temperature decomposable compound]

50 [0023] The high temperature decomposable compound is stable at a temperature of 600 °C or less and has a high transmissivity in the reading light beam irradiated to the optical disc and a high hardness to support the layer shape 45 itself. Prospective metal compounds include metal nitride, metal oxide, metal carbide and the like as well as the mixture of at least two thereof. In addition, the inventors have performed the selection of layer component under the conditions of simultaneously sputterable material with the low temperature decomposable nitride while considering the environment except materials specified under the PRTR Low. As a result, the metal nitride stable at a high temperature, GeN, SiN, AlN, and TiN are preferable.

55 [0024] The inventors have analyzed GeN, SiN, AlN, and TiN with the differential scanning calorimetry and then recognized that no decomposing reaction of GeN occurs at 500 °C. The inventors have formed optical discs having recording layers constituted by these high temperature decomposable nitrides respectively and then evaluated them. As a result, it comes to a conclusion that optical discs GeN>TiN>SiN>AlN are superior in this order on sturdiness. The use of GeN or TiN is preferable in optical characteristics. In addition to the nitride, the stable metal compound at a high temperature includes stable metal oxides such as SiO₂, Al₂O₃, GeO₂, SnO, Bi₂O₃ and the like, and stable metal carbides such as SiC and the like, as well as the mixture thereof. Generally almost oxides have high thermal sturdiness, some of which exhibit glass transition at a high temperature. Also, SiC in carbides has a high thermal sturdiness and no melting under the atmospheric pressure.

[0025] Table 2 shows melting points of oxides and carbide instead of decomposition temperatures, because the decomposition temperature melting point is higher than the melting point. Here, the sublimating point is shown when the sublimating point is lower than the melting point.

Table 2

Oxides or carbide	Melting points (or sublimating point : SP) (°C)
SiO ₂	1710
Al ₂ O ₃	1990 or more
GeO ₂	1116
SnO ₂	1127
Bi ₂ O ₃	820
TiO ₂	1640
TiO	1750
ZnO	1725(SP)
Cr ₂ O ₃	1990
CoO	1935
ZrO ₂	2700
FeO	1370
CuO	1026
NiO	1998
BaO	1923
MnO	1650
MgO	2880
SiC	2200 or more (SP)

[Film deposition method]

[0026] While the recording layer 5 of metal nitride can be deposited by various vapor deposition methods, it is preferably formed by a reactive sputtering method, and particularly it is preferably formed by the reactive sputtering method in an atmosphere including Ar and N₂ using a metal alloy target. This film forming process is preferable because the recording layer can be homogeneously formed at once. Besides, co-sputtering can be used for the process in which deposition simultaneously is performed using a plurality of targets or divided targets. In the reactive sputtering method, a flow ratio Ar:N₂ in a sputtering atmosphere preferably ranges from 80:10 to 10:80, and more preferably from 80:10 to 30:60. Namely, nitrogen is added so enough for the recording layer to have a satisfactory sensitivity and a jitter characteristic after recording, with a value in the range of amount to be added for sputter atmosphere flow ratio Ar:N₂ = 80:10 to 0:100. Moreover, nitrogen is added so enough for the recording layer to have absorption in a violaceous laser beam having a wavelength of the vicinity of 400 nm, with a value in the range of amount to be added for sputtering atmosphere flow ratio Ar:N₂ = 30:60 to 100:0. Further, due to reactive sputtering, the deposition rate tends to slow down as the amount of nitrogen gas introduced increases. Therefore, due to a requirement to simplify the fabrication, it is desirable that the deposition rate is in the range of 2 nm/min or more (sputtering atmosphere flow ratio is Ar:N₂ = 10:80 to 100:0). It is conceivable that an amorphous metal nitride is mixed in the recording layer formed in this manner.

[0027] A method of manufacturing the information recording medium of the embodiment includes, as shown in Fig. 5, a step S1 for loading a substrate on a sputtering device, and a recording layer forming step S4 for forming the recording layer by a reactive sputtering method using an alloy target comprising metal constituting a metal nitride, wherein the flow ratio Ar:N₂ in atmosphere including Ar and N₂ in the recording layer forming step is set to be within the range of 80:10 to 10:80. Moreover, when forming the reflecting layer, the following procedure is performed in the order as shown in Fig. 5. After the substrate loading step S1, a reflecting layer is formed through the sputtering in an Ar gas atmosphere executed using a predetermined target (reflecting layer forming step S2). And then a first dielectric layer is formed through the sputtering in an Ar gas atmosphere executed using another predetermined target (first

dielectric layer forming step S3). After the recording layer S4 (Ar and N₂ atmosphere), a second dielectric layer is formed through the sputtering in an Ar gas atmosphere executed using another predetermined target (second dielectric layer forming step S5). Lastly, a covering layer is formed (S6).

[0028] The recording layer 5 comprising the nitride composed of one or more elements of Bi, Sn, and either of the elements Ge, Ti, Si and Al for example, GeBiN, is capable of absorbing 10% or more of light in the vicinity of wavelength 405 nm at an unrecorded portion. The recording layer 5 can achieve such an absorption rate even in a short wavelength area of, for example, 385 to 450 nm, thus making it possible to cope with high density recording using a short wavelength laser light. Recording using violaceous laser can be performed with less recording energy by containing a metal nitride in the recording layer. In addition, since the reactive sputtering allows control of the percentage of nitrogen in the metal nitride to change the absorption rate of the recording layer, the degree of freedom in designing of the medium is increased, a high reflectance and a suitable recording sensitivity are provided, and at the same time a high modulation degree, a low jitter, and a low cross talk can be implemented.

[0029] It should be noted that inert gas such as Xe, Kr other than Ar can be added in the sputtering atmosphere. In addition, the metal used as a target may be replaced by an off-stoichiometry material. Further, the use of the metal nitride target allows forming the above recording layer by using only Ar without N₂ gas.

[0030] While the thickness of the recording layer is determined as appropriate depending on the physical property of the recording layer, the physical property and thickness of the dielectric layer, it has been confirmed that a jitter can be removed sufficiently in case of the thickness being 5 to 40 nm, preferably 10 to 30 nm, for example 12 nm. If the thickness of the recording layer is thinner than 5 nm, it becomes difficult to enlarge the degree of modulation. If it is thicker than 40 nm, reflectance becomes insufficient due to light absorption by the recording layer.

[0031] Configurations other than the recording layer 5 of the embodiment shown in Fig. 1 will be described below in detail.

[Substrate 2]

[0032] For a substrate 2, glass or plastic resin such as an acrylic resin, a polycarbonate resin, an epoxy resin, a polyolefin resin, or the like, is used. Further, an ultraviolet curing resin or the like is coated and hardened on a flat plate by a spin-coat method. Alternatively a sheet material of plastic resin is adhered together by an adhesive is also used.

[0033] While the substrate 2 is not particularly limited in dimension and shape thereof, it is in the form of disc and generally has a thickness of about 0.3 to 1.2 mm. A predetermined pattern such as a groove or the like can be provided on the substrate 2 as appropriate so as to guide a light beam for recording/reproduction such as for tracking, address, or the like. The light beam for recording/reproduction is usually irradiated within the groove. A groove can be provided on either or both of a light incident side and a light reflecting side of the substrate. Deposition can be performed from either side, the light incident or reflecting side. The substrate 2 may also be a card-form recording medium in addition to the disc shape.

[Dielectric layers 4 and 6]

[0034] Dielectric layers 4, 6 are made of one or more of dielectrics, for example, an oxide, a nitride, or a sulfide of SiO₂, SiN_X, ZnS, or the like, or a metallic compound such as various kinds of a metallic oxide, and a metallic carbide, and a mixture thereof, e.g., ZnS-SiO₂, but are not limited to them in particular. Alternatively, with respect to a so-called LaSiON which contains La, Si, O, and N, and a so-called SiAlON dielectric which contains Si, Al, O, and N, only a combination of materials which are not designated under the PRTR law can be selected. The dielectric layer may comprise a plurality of layers.

[0035] The second dielectric layer on the light incident side is provided in a thickness of 0 to 100 nm for adjusting an optical reflectance and for adjusting a recording mode to a desired specification, high to low, or low to high.

[0036] The first dielectric layer on a light reflecting side functions to temporarily store heat generated by a laser light before it escapes to the reflecting layer to heat the recording layer sufficiently. The thickness of the dielectric layer is 40 nm or less, preferably 10 to 30 nm.

[Reflecting layer 3]

[0037] A reflecting layer 3 preferably mainly includes a metal or an alloy having a high reflectance, and the metal may be one selected from, for example, Ag, Al, Au, Pt, Cu, or the like, and the alloy may be one including at least one of them or the like, as appropriate.

[0038] The thickness of the reflecting layer 3 is preferably 30 to 150 nm. If the thickness is below the range, it becomes difficult to acquire a sufficient reflectance. In addition, a thickness exceeding the range provides only a little improvement in reflectance and is disadvantageous in terms of cost. The reflecting layer 3 is preferably formed by a vapor phase

epitaxy method, such as a sputtering method, a vapor deposition method, or the like.

[0039] Moreover, a semitransparent film may be used for the reflecting layer. The semitransparent reflecting layer can be adapted to a multilayer write-once optical disc having a multilayered structure of recording layers so as to be disposed at a near side of the optical pickup. The lamination order without the reflecting layer is Substrate /Dielectric layer /Recording layer /Dielectric layer /Covering layer.

[Light transparent covering layer 7]

[0040] In an information recording medium 1, a light for recording and a light for reproduction are irradiated to the recording layer 5 through a light transparent covering layer 7. Therefore, the light transparent covering layer 7 must be substantially transparent relative to the lights. Further, the light transparent covering layer 7 is provided so as to increase a mar resistance and a corrosion resistance, and preferably includes a variety of organic materials. In particular, it can comprise materials made by hardening a radiation curing type compound or a constituent thereof by radiation such as an electron beam, an ultraviolet ray, or the like.

[0041] The thickness of the light transparent covering layer 7 is usually approximately 0.1 to 600 mm, and may be formed by an ordinal method such as spin deposition, gravure deposition, spray deposition, dipping, and the like. Specifically, a variety of resins such as an acrylic resin, a polycarbonate resin, an epoxy resin, a polyolefin resin, and the like may be used. Moreover, a plastic resin sheet may be used as a covering layer so as to be adhered with a pertinent adhesive to the dielectric layer.

[Layer structure]

[0042] In the foregoing, a case where the present invention is applied to a single-sided recording type information recording medium has been described, and the present invention is also applicable to a double-sided recording type information recording medium. Further, the one-sided recording type can also be configured to comprise a protective layer which is adhered onto the light transparent covering layer 7. In this manner, the layer structure of the recording medium is applicable as well as to the above composition and combination of the recording layer, to a variety of configurations, should they only meet the requirements of the present invention. There are many configurations such as a configuration having no light transparent covering layer, a configuration having a layer of another material added other than a dielectric layer, a recording layer, and a reflecting layer, a configuration in which a recording layer further includes multilayers, a configuration having no reflecting layer, a configuration having two reflecting layers, a configuration having no light reflecting side substrate, a configuration having one or more recording medium configurations added at the positions of a light incident side substrate and a light reflecting side substrate to allow multilayer recording, and the like.

[0043] Examples of the present invention will be given and described in detail in the following.

[Example 1]

[0044] A reflecting layer 3, a first dielectric layer 4, a recording layer 5, a second dielectric layer 6, and a light transparent covering layer 7 were formed in turn on the surface of a substrate 2 to make a sample of an optical disc as Example 1 which has a configuration shown in Fig. 1.

[0045] As a light reflecting side substrate, there was used a substrate having a thickness of 1.1 mm and a diameter of 12 cm made of polycarbonate resin on which a spiral groove having a 27 nm depth and a pitch of 0.320 mm was provided.

[0046] A reflecting layer of Ag-Pd-Cu alloy having a thickness of 100 nm, and a first dielectric layer of ZnS-SiO₂ having a thickness of 10 nm were sequentially deposited on the substrate by a sputtering method.

[0047] Subsequently, a recording layer having a thickness of 12 nm was deposited in an atmosphere of 10 sccm of N₂ gas with respect to 80 sccm of Ar gas by a reactive sputtering method using a Bi-Ge target. The condition during reactive sputtering is, for example, that a distance between substrate targets is 120 mm, atmosphere pressure is 0.4 to 0.8 Pa, and power is 150 W in an RF magnetron sputtering apparatus.

[0048] Subsequently, a second dielectric layer of ZnS-SiO₂ (light incident side) having a thickness of 40 nm was further deposited by the sputtering method.

[0049] In addition, a polycarbonate resin sheet was adhered onto the second dielectric layer at the incident side using an ultraviolet curing resin to be a 0.1 mm thick covering layer to protect the recording layer. In this way, a recording medium of Example was obtained.

[0050] A random pattern of 1-7 modulation was recorded on the produced sample using a multipath record at a linear velocity of 5.3 m/s with recording laser power of 5.3 mW and window width of 15.15 nsec, using an optical head having an objective lens with a numerical aperture (NA) of 0.85 and a light source at wavelength of 405 nm. When a jitter after

recording is measured, a jitter of about 9.8% was obtained.

[Example 2]

5 [0051] An optical disc of Example 2 was formed in the same manner as Example 1 except that a recording layer was subjected to reactive sputtering and deposited in an atmosphere of 20 sccm of N₂ gas with respect to 70 sccm of Ar gas to provide the second dielectric layer of ZnS-SiO₂ having a thickness of 25 nm at the light incident side.

10 [0052] When a random pattern was recorded, and a jitter after recording was measured in the same manner as Example 1 except that a recording laser power of 5.0 mW was used in this Example, a satisfactory jitter of about 7.5% was obtained.

[Example 3]

15 [0053] An optical disc of Example 3 was formed in the same manner as Example 1 except that a recording layer was subjected to reactive sputtering and deposited in an atmosphere of 40 sccm of N₂ gas with respect to 50 sccm of Ar gas to provide the second dielectric layer of ZnS-SiO₂ having a thickness of 20 nm.

20 [0054] When a random pattern was recorded, and a jitter after recording was measured in the same manner as Example 1 except that a recording laser power was 5.0 mW in this Example, a satisfactory jitter of about 7.3% was obtained.

[Example 4]

25 [0055] An optical disc of Example 4 was formed in the same manner as Example 1 except that a recording layer was subjected to reactive sputtering and deposited in an atmosphere of 70 sccm of N₂ gas with respect to 20 sccm of Ar gas to provide the second dielectric layer of ZnS-SiO₂ having a thickness of 15 nm.

[0056] When a random pattern was recorded, and a jitter after recording was measured in the same manner as Example 1 except that a recording laser power was 5.7 mW in this Example, a satisfactory jitter of about 7.4% was obtained.

30 [0057] When a random pattern was recorded, and a jitter after recording was measured in the same manner as Example 1 except that a recording laser power was 8.6 mW in this Example, a satisfactory jitter of about 9.2% was obtained.

[Comparative example 1]

35 [0058] An optical disc of Comparative example 1 was formed in the same manner as Example 1 except that a BiGe recording layer having a thickness of 25 nm was deposited by sputtering in an atmosphere which was added with no nitrogen but Ar gas only to provide the first and second dielectric layers of ZnS-SiO₂ having thicknesses of 40 nm and 20 nm at the light reflecting and incident sides respectively.

40 [0059] When a random pattern was recorded, and a jitter after recording was measured in the same manner as Example 1 except that a recording laser power was 5.0 mW in this Example, the result was an immeasurable level of 20% or more.

[Comparative example 2]

45 [0060] An optical disc of Comparative example 2 was formed in the same manner as Example 1 except that a reflecting layer was not deposited, and sputtered in an atmosphere which was added with no nitrogen but with Ar gas only to deposit a BiGe recording layer having a thickness of 30 nm by employing the first and second dielectric layers of ZnS-SiO₂ having thicknesses of 35 nm and 30 nm at the light reflecting and incident sides, respectively.

50 [0061] When a random pattern was recorded, and a jitter after recording was measured in the same manner as Example 1 except that a recording laser power was 5.0 mW in this Example, a jitter of about 16% was obtained.

[Conclusion]

55 [0062] Measurement results acquired from the samples are shown in figures. Figs. 6 and 7 show variations in absorption rate of 405 nm wavelength and 635 nm wavelength lights on a recording layer of the samples respectively (measured while sealed by a ZnS-SiO₂ film). Fig. 8 shows variations in recording laser power and jitter after recording on the recording layer of the sample with respect to the amount of nitrogen added. Fig. 9 shows variations in deposition rate on the recording layer of Example with respect to the amount of nitrogen added.

[0063] It can be seen from Fig. 6 that the recording layer comprising a GeBi nitride can secure the absorption rate of 10% or more of the light in the vicinity of 405 nm in the unrecorded portion thereof.

[0064] It can be seen from Fig. 7 that addition of nitrogen greatly reduces the absorption rate of the light in the vicinity of 635 nm of the recording layer and recording sensitivity, thereby addition of nitrogen to an information recording medium which uses 635 nm wavelength light for recording/reproduction is limited to only a very small amount due to the restriction of the recording sensitivity.

[0065] It can be seen from Fig. 8 that the addition of nitrogen in reactive sputtering must be preferably added such that the recording layer has a satisfactory sensitivity and a jitter characteristic after recording (a sputtering atmosphere flow ratio is Ar:N₂ = 80:10 to 0:100), and is within the range in which a sufficient absorption is secured with a violaceous laser in the vicinity of 400 nm (a sputtering atmosphere flow ratio is Ar:N₂ = 30:60 to 100:0).

[0066] It can be seen from Fig. 9 that a deposition rate slows down with an increase in the amount introduced of nitrogen gas due to reactive sputtering, and the range in which the deposition rate is 2 nm/min or more in view of necessity of easy fabrication is when a sputtering atmosphere flow ratio is Ar:N₂ = 10:80 to 100:0.

15 [Further Embodiments A-C]

[0067] Similarly to the above embodiments, there were layered on substrate of polycarbonate resin by the sputtering and reactive sputtering, the alloy reflecting layer of Ag, the first dielectric layer of ZnS-SiO₂, the recording layer, the second dielectric layer of ZnS-SiO₂ in this order. The recording layer was formed through the reactive sputtering using an alloy target consisting of nitrided metal component while introducing nitrogen gas into Ar gas. After that, a polycarbonate resin sheet was adhered onto the second dielectric layer at the incident side using an ultraviolet curing resin to be a 0.1 mm thick covering layer to protect the recording layer. In this way, optical discs of embodiments A-C were obtained. Table 3 shows the conditions of reactive sputtering including thicknesses of the layers, the recording layer (thickness, composition, layered order).

25 Table 3

Disc		A	B	C
Reflecting layer	Thickness (nm)	100	100	100
1st dielectric layer	Thickness (nm)	15	10	10
Recording layer	Thickness (nm)	12	12	20
	Composition	SnTiN	SnSiN	SnAlN
	Sputtering device	DC	RF	RF
	Deposition gas (flow:sccm)	Ar (40) + N ₂ (50)	Ar (70) + N ₂ (20)	Ar (50) + N ₂ (40)
	Metal component ratio (atm)	Sn:Ti = 80:20	Sn:Si = 80:20	Sn:Al = 80:20
2nd dielectric layer	Thickness (nm)	13	8	76

40 [Further Comparative examples]

[0068] Similarly to the above Comparative examples, optical discs of H and I were formed in the same manner as Example 1 except that the recording layer is formed only of alloy without nitrogen N₂. Table 4 the conditions of sputtering including thicknesses of the layers, the recording layer (thickness, composition, layered order).

45 Table 4

Disc		H	I
Reflecting layer	Thickness (nm)	100	100
1st dielectric layer	Thickness (nm)	10	10

Table 4 (continued)

Disc		H	I
Recording layer	Thickness(nm)	10	12
	Composition	SnSi	SnAl
	Sputtering device	RF	RF
	Deposition gas (flow:sccm)	Ar(90)	Ar (90)
	Metal component ratio (atm)	Sn:Si = 80:20	Sn:Al = 80:20
2nd dielectric layer	Thickness (nm)	60	50

[0069] A random pattern of 1-7 modulation was recorded on these Examples and Comparative using a multipath record at a linear velocity of 5. 3 m/ s with recording laser power of 5. 3 mW and window width of 15.15 nsec, using an optical head having an objective lens with a numerical aperture (NA) of 0.85 and a light source at wavelength of 405 nm. Table 5 shows the results of measurements.

Table 5

Disc	Recording power (mW)	Jitter (%)
A	7.8	8.3
B	8.6	9.2
C	8.9	11.9
H	7.5	15.5
I	5.6	18.2

[0070] Embodiments A-C exhibited satisfactory values of jitter were obtained in comparison with Comparative H, I.

[0071] Fig. 10 shows recorded marks on the BiGeN recording layer (Embodiment 2) in a photograph of TEM(transmission electron microscope), and Fig. 11 shows recorded marks on the SnTiN recording layer (Optical disc A) in a photograph of TEM. As seen from both the photographs, there is evidence that the respective recorded marks are formed of sub-micron bubbles without spreading out the guide groove during the recording. In addition, an elevation difference between the non-recording portion and the recording portion in the thickness direction was at most approximately 6 nm with respect to the guide groove with 27 nm depth in observation with an atomic force microscope (not shown).

[0072] Ge, and Bi as well as a nitride and an oxide thereof on the BiGeN recording layer of sample optical discs were subjected to ESCA, and measurement results thereof are shown in Table 6. On the basis of Table 6, Fig. 12 shows variations in content percentage of the non-nitride (Ge and the oxide thereof) and Ge nitride with respect to the amount of nitrogen added, and Fig. 13 shows variations in content percentage of the non-nitride (Bi and the oxide thereof) and Bi nitride with respect to the amount of nitrogen added.

Table 6

Added flow (sccm)		Non-nitride			Nitride
N ₂ gas	Ar gas	Ge	GeO _x	Ge+GeO _x	GeN
5	85	4.30%	92.50%	97.80%	3.20%
10	80	15.00%	0.00%	15.00%	85.00%
20	70	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
70	20	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
80	10	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Added flow (sccm)		Non-nitride			Nitride
N ₂ gas	Ar gas	Bi	Bi ₂ O ₃	Bi+Bi ₂ O ₃	BiN
5	85	34.70%	12.10%	46.80%	53.30%

Table 6 (continued)

Added flow (sccm)		Non-nitride			Nitride
N ₂ gas	Ar gas	Bi	Bi ₂ O ₃	Bi+Bi ₂ O ₃	BiN
10	80	20.50%	2.80%	23.30%	76.70%
20	70	13.80%	0.00%	13.80%	86.20%
70	20	8.40%	0.00%	8.40%	91.60%
80	10	5.60%	0.00%	5.60%	94.40%

[0073] The foregoing results show that a metal Ge remains when an introduced amount of nitrogen during deposition is 5 sccm. A material which is not nitrided exists including the metal Ge oxidized on the recording layer into Ge-O composition during the chemical analysis. The metal Ge is virtually nonexistent when the introduced amount of nitrogen during deposition is 10 sccm, and only Ge-N composition is observed when the introduced amount of nitrogen is 20 sccm or more.

[0074] Specifically, it will be understood that 85% or more of Ge in the recording film is nitrided when the amount of nitrogen introduced is 10 sccm or more. When a larger amount of nitrogen is introduced, a deposition rate drops, so that the amount of nitrogen introduced is effective if it is 10 to 80 sccm. Since the range where the recording layer is capable of providing sufficient absorption is preferred in terms of recording sensitivity, the amount of nitrogen to be introduced is desirably 10 to 60 sccm.

[0075] Similarly, Fig. 6 show that metal Bi remains when an introduced amount of nitrogen during deposition is 5 sccm. In a recording film, Bi exists in a mixture of metal Bi and Bi-N composition, and the percentage of nitride increases as the introduced amount of nitrogen increases during deposition.

[0076] When the introduced amount of nitrogen during deposition is 80 sccm, about 94% of Bi is nitrided. Therefore, it is preferable that 85% or more of Ge is nitrided and 94% or less of Bi is nitrided. Further, it is preferable that 85% of Ge is nitrided and 90% or less of Bi is nitrided in a case where the introduced amount of nitrogen during deposition is 60 sccm, which is required so as to enhance recording sensitivity.

[0077] Therefore, the metal component ratio in the recording layer is a wide range (the high temperature decomposable compound such as metal nitride range from 20 to 40 atm.%), which has a good characteristic. However, when the high temperature decomposable compound consists of nitride, it is necessary to adjust the nitrogen flow rate so that the film is perfectly nitrided during deposition.

[0078] When the flow rate ratio of the added nitrogen is increased, the non-nitrided component is reduced in the low temperature decomposable nitride to decrease the absorption rate of the recording layer. As a result, the sensitivity of the recording layer become inferior and the deposition rate of film is reduced to decrease productivity of the layer. Therefore, the quantity of the added nitrogen should be adjusted as possible in a bit for the benefit of productivity.

[0079] Fig. 14 shows a setting method for determining conditions of the reactive sputtering deposition to form a recording layer in which the high temperature decomposable compound of the recording layer consists of metal nitride. First, there is formed a sputtering target consisting of alloy including metal components to be included in such metal nitride, or of oxide thereof or of nitride thereof. For example, an alloy target is provided in a chamber of the sputtering device (SS1). Next, flow rates of Ar gas and nitrogen gas are decided on the basis of predetermined initial values as sputtering introducing gases (SS2). Next, the reactive sputtering deposition is preformed (SS3). Next, the deposited recording layer is analyzed in component (SS4). Next, the judgment whether or not the high temperature decomposable compound is perfectly nitrided is performed (SS5). Here, if the high temperature decomposable compound is not perfectly nitrided then back to the flow rate decision step (SS2) to increase the flow rate of nitrogen gas for a prefect nitridation. Whereas, if the high temperature decomposable compound is not perfectly nitrided then the judgment whether or not the non-nitrided component of the low temperature decomposable nitride exists in the layer is performed (SS6). Here, if the non-nitrided component of the low temperature decomposable nitride is insufficient then back to the flow rate decision step (SS2) to decrease the flow rate of nitrogen gas to ensure the non-nitrided component in the recording layer. Whereas, if the non-nitrided component is sufficient in the recording layer then there is determined the flow rate of nitrogen gas as it is (SS7) and thus the setting of deposition conditions of the recording layer is completed. The determined flow rate of nitrogen gas goes forward to the step of manufacturing the recording layer. Further, the foregoing setting method of deposition conditions may be used in case that materials other than metal nitride are used for the recording layer.

[0080] Fig. 15 shows a cross section view of a target for sputtering having a disc-shape body T fixed on a packing plate PP to deposit the recording layer. The target may be formed of a homogenized alloy or nitride or oxide. Alternatively, the target may be formed of a plurality of simple substance pieces in mosaic in view of the sputtering yield.

[0081] According to the invention, the thermal decomposition may be controlled by the mixture layer i.e., recording layer consisting of the metal nitride easily decomposed due to a recording laser power of irradiated light (low temperature decomposable nitride) and the metal compound hardly decomposed (high temperature decomposable compound). Therefore, such a layer construction provides the minute marks with excellent shapes after recording as shown in Figs. 10 and 11 with minimum deformation. Mainly, information recording is achieved with changes of the optical characteristic in the recording layer after the thermal decomposition. Thus there is obtained the recording layer having a considerable difference in reflectance before and after recording and a high S/N ratio and an excellent jitter characteristic.

[0082] In addition, the mixed recording layer can be formed at once in the reactive sputtering deposition with added nitrogen while adjusting target contents.

[0083] Further, the components of the recording layer may be selected from inorganic materials, which is not designated as poisonous substances under the environmental criteria.

[0084] It is understood that the foregoing description and accompanying drawings set forth the preferred embodiments of the invention at the present time. Various modifications, additions and alternative designs will, of course, become apparent to those skilled in the art in light of the foregoing teachings without departing from the spirit and scope of the disclosed invention. Thus, it should be appreciated that the invention is not limited to the disclosed embodiments but may be practiced within the full scope of the appended claims.

20 Claims

1. An information recording medium comprising a recording layer which includes a material having a reflectance which varies by irradiation of a light beam, on which information is recorded as reflectance variations, and a substrate for supporting the recording layer, **characterized in that** said recording layer includes a metal nitride as a major component.
2. An information recording medium according to claim 1, wherein said recording layer includes a mixture of both a low temperature decomposable nitride nitrided insufficiently and capable of being decomposed at a predetermined temperature to generate nitrogen and a high temperature decomposable compound capable of being decomposed at a temperature higher than said predetermined temperature.
3. An information recording medium according to claim 2, wherein said predetermined temperature is a temperature ranging from 100 °C to 600 °C.
4. An information recording medium according to claim 1, wherein said high temperature decomposable compound is a metal compound.
5. An information recording medium according to claim 4, wherein said metal compound is a substance selected from a group consisting of a metal nitride, a metal oxide, a metal carbide and a mixture of at least two thereof.
6. An information recording medium according to claim 1, wherein said recording layer is formed by a reactive sputtering process with a nitrogen atmosphere using a target for sputtering while introducing nitrogen into a sputtering atmosphere and adjusting nitrogen in such a manner that said recording layer includes a non-nitrided component, wherein said target is made from at least one of an alloy, an oxide and a nitride each of which includes at least one metal component in said metal nitride.
7. An information recording medium according to claim 1, wherein said recording layer is formed by a sputtering process using a target for sputtering in such a manner that said recording layer includes a non-nitrided component, wherein said target is made from a nitride includes a metal component in said metal nitride.
8. An information recording medium according to claim 2, wherein said low temperature decomposable nitride is a nitride including at least of Bi, Sn, or Fe.
9. An information recording medium according to claim 2, wherein said high temperature decomposable compound is a nitride including at least of Ge, Ti, Si, or Al.
10. An information recording medium according to claim 2, wherein said low temperature decomposable nitride is a nitride of Cu.

11. An information recording medium according to claim 1, wherein said metal nitride contains any of Bi, Sn and Fe, and at least one material selected from Si, Ge, Al and Ti.

5 12. An information recording medium according to claim 1, wherein said metal nitride contains Bi and Ge, and the Ge is nitrided by 85% or more.

13. An information recording medium according to claim 12, wherein the Bi is nitrided by 90% or less.

10 14. An information recording medium according to claim 12, wherein the Bi is nitrided by 94% or less.

15 15. An information recording medium according to claim 1, wherein said metal nitride contains any of Bi, Sn and Fe, and at least one material selected from Mg, Ca, Sr, Sc, Y, Zr, Hf, V, Nb, Tc, Ru, Rh, W, Re, Os, Ir, Pt, Au, Ta, Ga, O and C.

20 16. An information recording medium according to claim 1, wherein said metal nitride contains any of Bi, Sn and Fe, and at least one material selected from Tl, Te, In, Zn, and Ag.

17. An information recording medium according to claim 1, wherein said metal nitride contains Cu, and at least one material selected from Si, Ge, Al, Ti, Mg, Ca, Sr, Sc, Y, Zr, Hf, V, Nb, Tc, Ru, Rh, W, Re, Os, Ir, Pt, Au, Ta, Ga, Tl, Te, In, Zn, Ag, O and C.

25 18. An information recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 17, wherein it has a protective layer for protecting said recording layer.

19. An information recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 18, wherein it has a reflecting layer on a side opposite to the one where said light beam is irradiated.

30 20. An information recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 19, wherein said light beam has a wavelength of 385 to 450 nm.

35 21. A method of manufacturing an information recording medium having a recording layer which includes a material having a reflectance varying by irradiation of a light beam, on which information is recorded as reflectance variations, and a substrate for supporting said recording layer, the recording layer including a metal nitride as a major component, the method comprising: a recording layer forming step for forming said recording layer by a reactive sputtering method using a target comprised of a metal constituting said metal nitride, **characterized in that** a flow ratio Ar:N₂ in an atmosphere including Ar and N₂ in said recording layer forming step is set within the range of 80:10 to 10:80.

40 22. A method of manufacturing an information recording medium according to claim 21, wherein said flow ratio Ar:N₂ is set within the range of 80:10 to 30:60.

23. A target used for sputtering in a method of manufacturing an information recording medium having a recording layer including a metal nitride as a major component, in which said recording layer is formed so as to include a non-nitrided component, wherein said target is made from at least one of an alloy, an oxide and a nitride each of which includes at least one metal component in said metal nitride, whereby the recording layer has a reflectance which varies by irradiation of a light beam, on which information is recorded as reflectance variations.

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FIG. 1

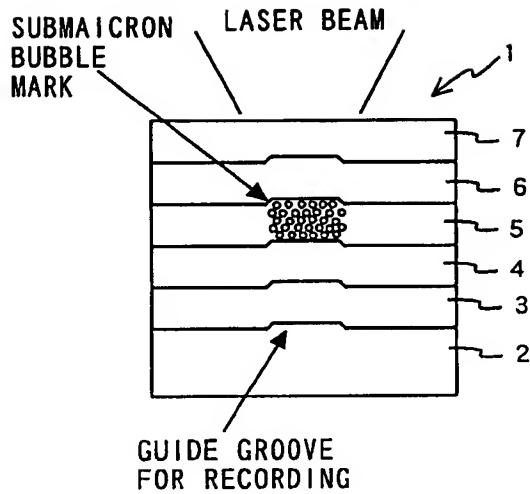


FIG. 2

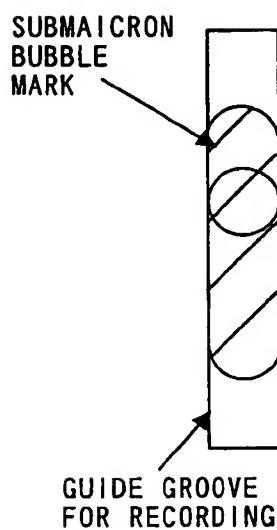


FIG. 3

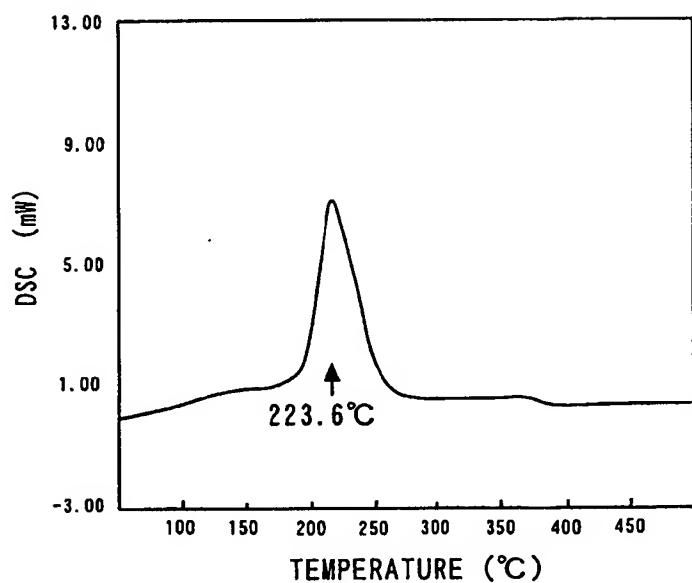


FIG. 4

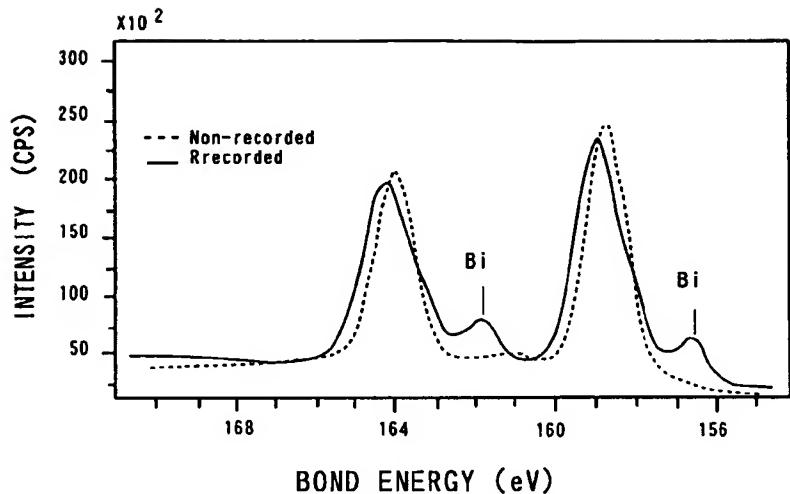


FIG. 5

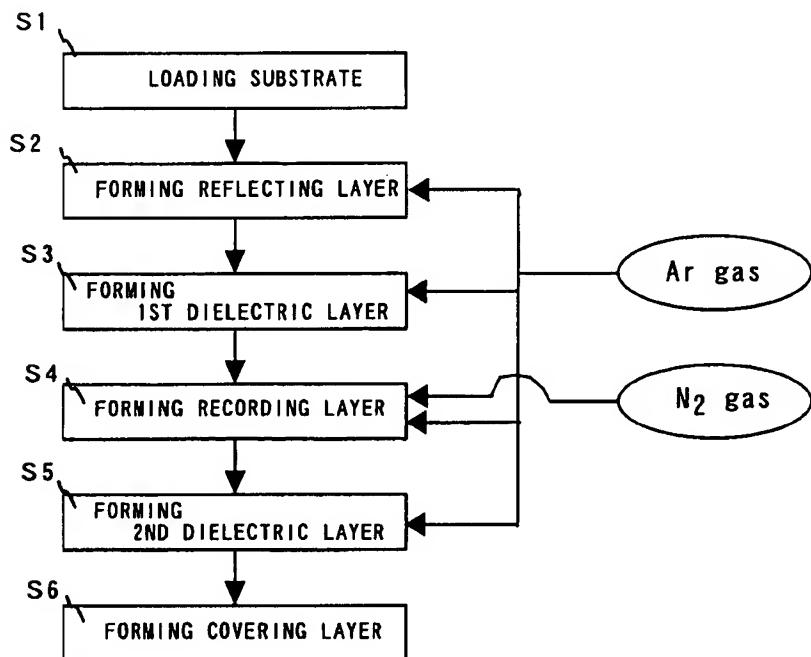


FIG. 6

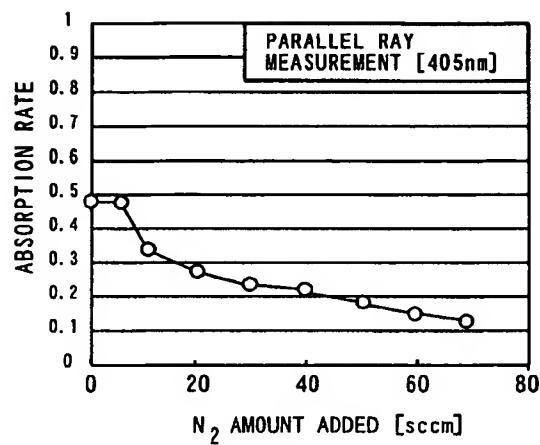


FIG. 7

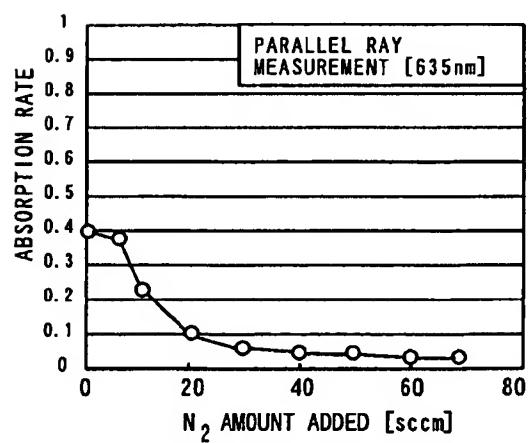


FIG. 8

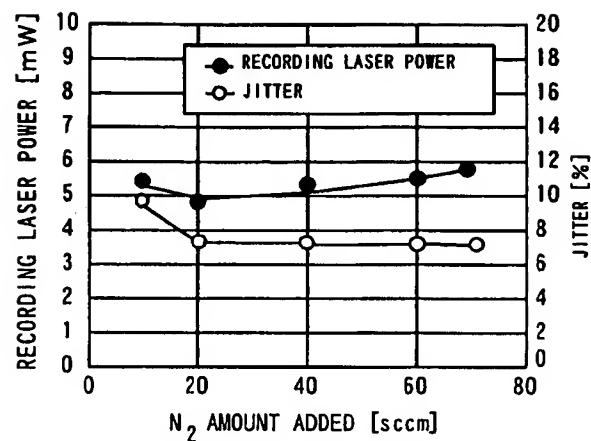


FIG. 9

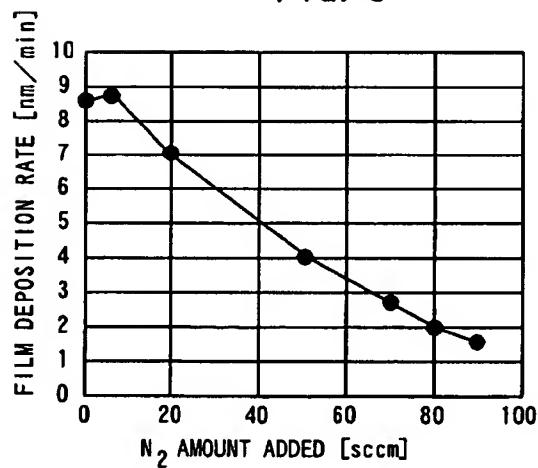


FIG. 1 0

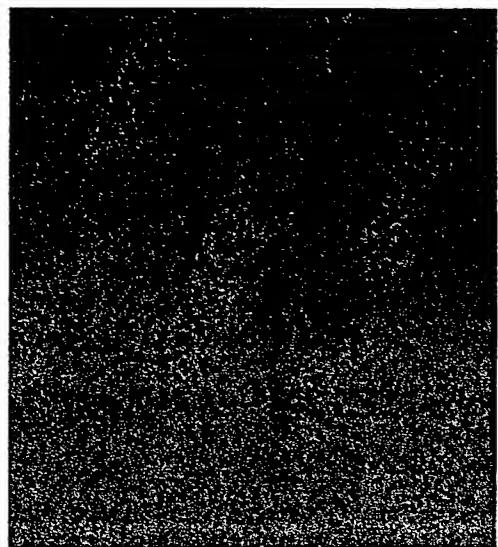


FIG. 1 1

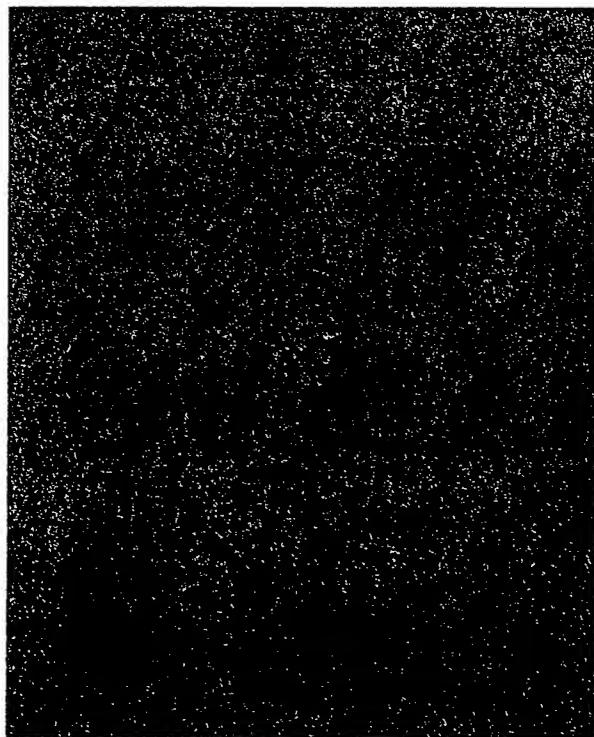


FIG. 1 2

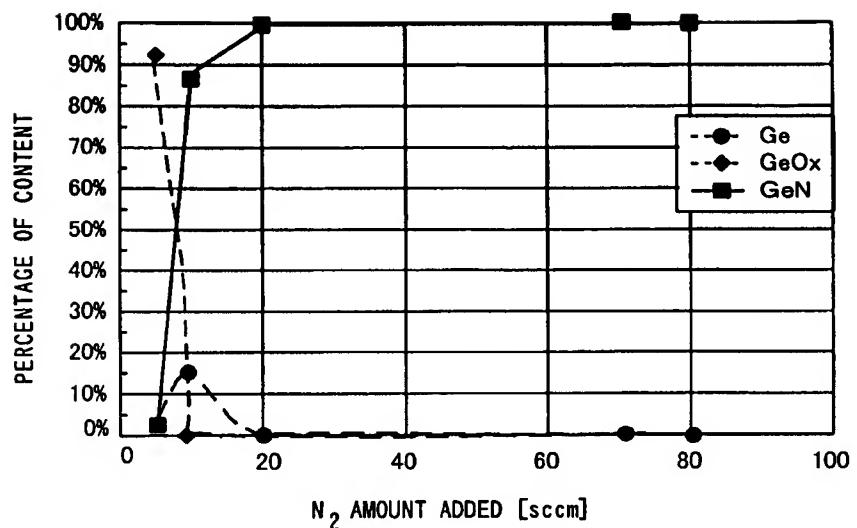


FIG. 1 3

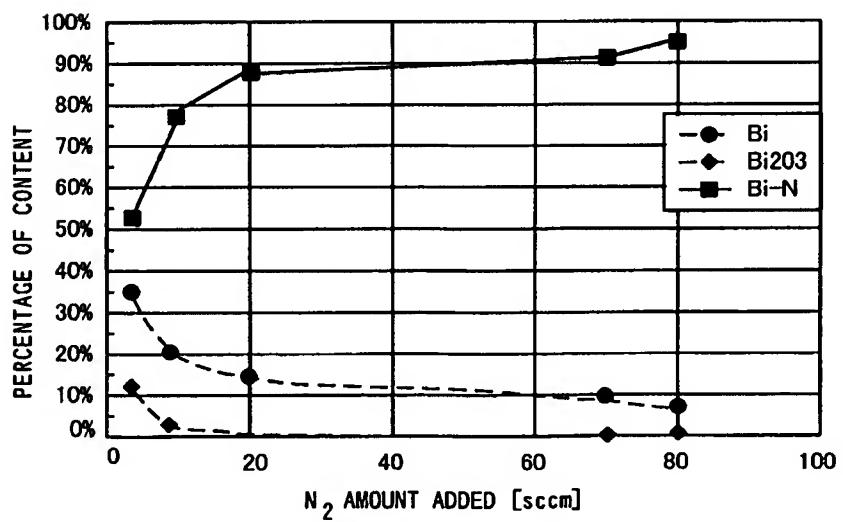


FIG. 1 4

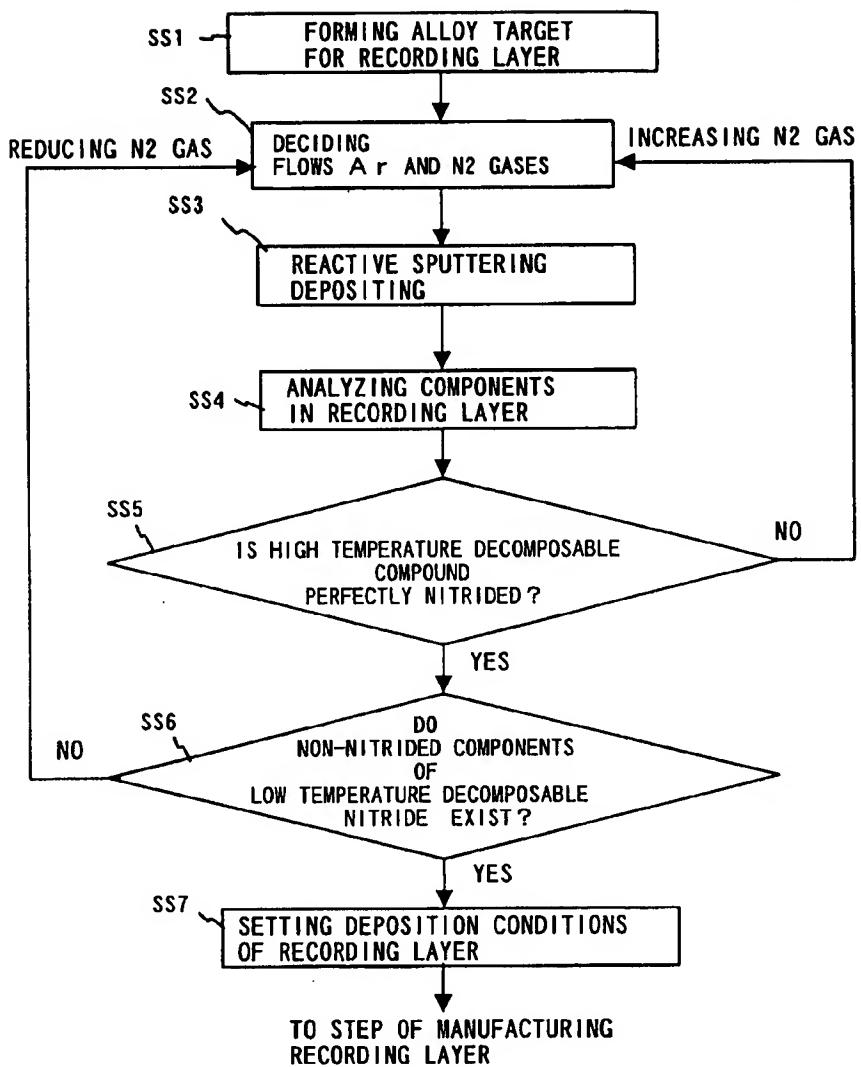
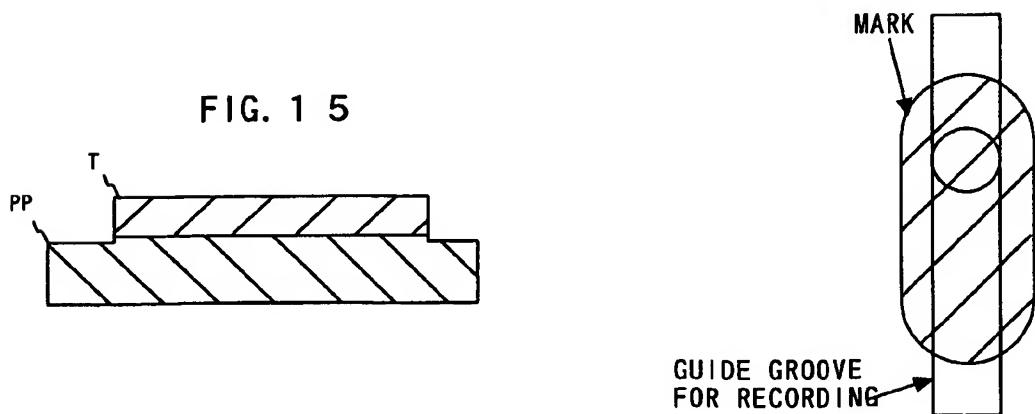


FIG. 1 6



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/JP03/06439

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

Int.Cl⁷ B41M5/26, G11B7/24, G11B7/26

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

Int.Cl⁷ B41M5/26, G11B7/24, G11B7/26

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1922-1996 Toroku Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1994-2003
Kokai Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1971-2003 Jitsuyo Shinan Toroku Koho 1996-2003

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5034255 A (Mitsui Petrochemical Industries Ltd.), 23 July, 1991 (23.07.91), Full text & JP 2-249687 A	1-9, 16, 18-23
X	JP 62-11685 A (Mitsubishi Chemical Industries Ltd.), 20 January, 1987 (20.01.87), Full text (Family: none)	1-8, 16, 18-23
X	JP 5-212967 A (Dainippon Printing Co., Ltd.), 24 August, 1993 (24.08.93), Full text (Family: none)	1-8, 18-23

 Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:	
"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date	"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	"&" document member of the same patent family
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search 19 August, 2003 (19.08.03)	Date of mailing of the international search report 02 September, 2003 (02.09.03)
Name and mailing address of the ISA/ Japanese Patent Office	Authorized officer
Facsimile No.	Telephone No.

Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet) (July 1998)

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT		International application No. PCT/JP03/06439
C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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X	JP 61-34741 A (American Telephone and Telegraph Co.), 19 February, 1986 (19.02.86), Full text (Family: none)	1-7, 18-23
X	JP 63-63153 A (NEC Corp.), 19 March, 1988 (19.03.88), Full text (Family: none)	1-10, 16-23
X	US 4839208 A (NEC Corp.), 13 June, 1989 (13.06.89), Full text & JP 62-256691 A	1-7, 18-23
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X	JP 4-121842 A (Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., Ltd.), 22 April, 1992 (22.04.92), Full text (Family: none)	1-7, 9, 18-23
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Form PCT/ISA/210 (continuation of second sheet) (July 1998)

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT		International application No. PCT/JP03/06439
C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	JP 10-76755 A (Industrial Technology Research Institute), 24 March, 1998 (24.03.98), Full text (Family: none)	18-20
A	JP 11-138996 A (Toyota Central Research And Development Laboratories, Inc.), 25 May, 1999 (25.05.99), Full text (Family: none)	18-20

Form PCT/ISA/210 (continuation of second sheet) (July 1998)

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/JP03/06439

Box I Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This international search report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. Claims Nos.:
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:

2. Claims Nos.:
because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:

3. Claims Nos.:
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box II Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 3 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

(See extra sheet)

1. As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims.
2. As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.
3. As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:

4. No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

Remark on Protest The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest.
 No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/JP03/06439

Continuation of Box No. II of continuation of first sheet(1)

1. Claims 1-5 and 18-20 are directed to an invention relating to an information recording medium whose recording layer is composed of a metal nitride as a main component.

2. Claims 6, 21 and 22 are directed to an invention relating to an information recording medium whose recording layer is composed of a metal nitride as a main component, wherein nitrogen is introduced in the recording layer by reactive sputtering.

3. Claims 7 and 23 are directed to an invention relating to an information recording medium whose recording layer is composed of a metal nitride as a main component, wherein the recording layer is formed with the use of a sputtering target *per se* containing a nitride of metal component.

4. Claims 8, 11, 15 and 16 are directed to an invention relating to an information recording medium whose recording layer comprises a low-temperature decomposable nitride and a high-temperature decomposable nitride and is composed of a metal nitride as a main component, the low-temperature decomposable nitride containing a metal selected from among Bi, Sn and Fe.

5. Claim 9 is directed to an invention relating to an information recording medium whose recording layer comprises a low-temperature decomposable nitride and a high-temperature decomposable compound and is composed of a metal nitride as a main component, the high-temperature decomposable compound being a nitride of any one of Ge, Ti, Si and Al.

6. Claims 10 and 17 are directed to an invention relating to an information recording medium whose recording layer comprises a low-temperature decomposable nitride and a high-temperature decomposable compound and is composed of a metal nitride as a main component, the low-temperature decomposable nitride containing a metal which is Cu.

7. Claims 12-14 are directed to an invention relating to an information recording medium whose recording layer is composed of a metal nitride as a main component, the metal nitride containing Bi and Ge, the Ge nitrided in a proportion of 85% or more.

With respect to the above inventions 1. to 7., it appears that the "information recording medium whose recording layer is composed of a metal nitride as a main component" as special technical matter within the meaning of PCT Rule 13.2 is known from, for example, US 5034255 A (Mitsui Petrochemical Industries, Ltd.). Consequently, these cannot be recognized as a group of inventions linked so as to form a single general inventive concept.

Therefore, in the above group of inventions, there is no relationship for satisfying the requirement of unity of invention.